

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace paragraph [0042] with the following amended paragraph:

[0042] FIG. 3 shows a high level diagram of an embodiment of a B2B environment 300. The environment generally includes a plurality of trading partners 302 connected to a supplier system 304 via a network 306 (e.g., the Internet). The trading partners 302 execute procurement software to generate a B2B request and transmit the request to the supplier system 304. Illustrative requests include purchase orders (PO), order status checks, and catalog maintenance. The supplier system 304 includes a front-end gateway ~~[[308]]~~ 404 adapted to handle the interfacing with the trading partners 302 over a variety of connectivity mechanisms and protocols. In one embodiment, the front-end gateway ~~[[308]]~~ 404 includes a collection of front-end protocols 310 to support the requests received from the trading partners 302. The front-end protocols 310 may be plug-ins and may be installed locally from a signal-bearing medium (e.g., a CD-ROM) or downloaded from the network 306.

Please replace paragraph [0043] with the following amended paragraph:

[0043] A back-end flow manager 312 and the front-end gateway ~~[[308]]~~ 404 communicate via a transport mechanism 316. In one embodiment, the transport mechanism 316 is a queuing mechanism. The back-end flow manager 312 is responsible for processing the requests by tying them to an appropriate application 314 (e.g., Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), supply chain application, etc.). Back-end access methods 318 are provided to facilitate a connection with the appropriate application 314. As with the front-end protocols 310, the access methods 318 may be installed locally or downloaded from a remote site on the network 306. Each access method 318 is configured to handle a particular type of interfacing mechanism, as will be described in more detail below.

Please replace paragraph [0044] with the following amended paragraph:

[0044] For simplicity, the front-end gateway [[308]] 404 and the back-end flow manager 312 are shown as an integral part of a single system. However, in another embodiment, the front-end gateway [[308]] 404 and the back-end flow manager 312 reside on different systems remotely located from one another. Such a distributed embodiment is facilitated by the use of transport mechanisms (e.g., transport mechanism 316) to communicate.